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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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WHITE-THROAT SINGS OF CANADA

Our neighbours in the United States call the White-Throated Sparrow the Peabody bird, because its song, rendered into English, has an imaginary resemblance to "Old Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody." Canadians know better. What the bird does sing, as any careful listener will confirm, is "Sweet, sweet, Canada, Canada, Canada!" Listen for this briefest, most musical of national anthems when you are out in the June woods and waysides. And that's a good time too, to get acquainted with the music of other sparrows, the song sparrow, the vesper sparrow's evensong, and other pleasing calls. Visitors to the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology, who in increasing numbers study the countless birds displayed there, often express wonder that there are so many kinds of sparrows in Ontario; and that they are so attractive in plumage as well as song. "Sparrow" all too often means the English sparrow exclusively with folk who are unaware of the thrills of bird-watching. Strictly speaking, that imported specimen is not a sparrow at all, but a weaver bird. Native sparrows in their pleasing plumage and song of such variety, are well worth nowing.

SHOW RARE PAUL KANE PAINTINGS

Three oil paintings, the early work of the pioneer Canadian artist Paul Kane, feature a special June showing in the California Indian Gallery of the Royal Ontario Museum. Two of them, a self-portrait and a pleasing Old World scene, are on public view for the first time. Earliest of the three is a portrait of Wilson S. Conger, a resident of York,) Toronto, Cobourg and Peterborough. He was Kane's first patron. Painted before the artist's European study, it is an interesting example of his self-taught skill. First identified by Mr. Edwin C. Guillet, it was his interest and the kindness of Mr. William Graff, Chief Librarian of Peterborough, that placed the picture on exhibition. Second of the paintings, the self-portrait, is believed to show Paul Kane at about the age of 35, and reveals Romanic School influence. Peasants at a wayside shrine are shown on the third canvas. This, there is little doubt, was painted in Europe, and is of unique interest as the sole work in oils so far discovered, executed while Kane studied there. Second and third canvasses were loaned by courtesy of Mr. A. H. O'Brien, Toronto.

Just a century ago—1848—Paul Kane returned from long wanderings over prairie and coastal regions of the Canadian West to settle in the Toronto of his boyhood. Fruits of his travels were a book, "Wanderings of an Artist," and paintings of primitive Indian life of great historical value. A hundred of these pictures grace walls at the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology. It is hoped that other Paul Kane paintings awaiting identification, will come to light through this showing of his early work.

CHINESE POTTERY IN SPECIAL SHOW

Centuries before the birth of Christ, the Chinese were making pottery and porcelain objects of great bauty. They are still doing it. This art has a high place among China's many rich gifts to the world. Thousands of such pieces are in the Chinese Ceramics section of the Royal Ontario Museum. From these collections about 150 objects have been selected for a special exhibition which opened in the Fresco Gallery on May 28th. Included are examples familiar to westerners as "table ware"—cups, bowls, plates, wine and tea pots; besides vases, jars, and sundry containers. They have been chosen for this showing for their beauty of form, colour, or exquisite glaze. Rarities in the groupings include black pottery imitations of bronze vessels of great antiquity (circum. 1200 B.C.) ; green glazed porcelains of the 3rd century A.D., and some fine examples of the earliest "true" porcelains extant, dating, perhaps, from the late 6th century. Some of these pieces are so rare that they are seldom found in museums of the West, but the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology is fortunate in being unusually rich in such treasures. Products of the Sung Kilns are well represented, as are pieces of outstanding quality from the Ming and Ch'ing periods. Arranged by periods, this special showing presents a picture of the development of Chinese porcelains from the dawn of history to the present day.

BABOON IN WAR PAINT

An African baboon, the Mandrill, has been called the most hideous animal on earth. That conclusion is a bit extreme. Most grotesque, or most clownish-looking would be better descriptions. Certainly the animal looks as if it had raided a paint shop to bedizen itself in the gaudiest of colours for a masquerade ball of the jungle. There's a tuft of soft hair on the top of its head; a pointed yellow beard adorns its chin. Cheek protuberances are startling in their striped pattern of brilliant blue. Other facial features are blood red. Above, the hair of this nightmare baboon is olive brown, below it is a silvery white. A full-grown male of this "make-up" monkey is five feet tall when standing erect. A Mandrill is included in the great assembly of mammals at the Royal Ontario Museum. So brilliant is the war-paint of this insect-eating baboon that it has to be seen before it is appreciated—or even believed!

BLUE ROBINS

With its lovely coat of blue, red vest, and sweet song, there is no bird of Ontario more popular than the Eastern Bluebird. When Charle Fothergill, pioneer naturalist, came to Upper Canada in 1817, there were no bird books to describe and identify the birds he saw—he had to name them himself. Bluebirds, he called "Blue Robins"—a singularly apt and happy name, says James L. Baillie, ornithologist at the Royal Ontario Museum.